

## **USPS Report on PRC Rate and Service Inquiries for September 2012**

The Postal Regulatory Commission referred 124 inquiries to the Postal Service in September. Customers received responses on average within 12 days.

Inquiries covered various topics that fell into three main categories:

- Delivery services (71) – i.e., the time of delivery, forwarding, and method of delivery.
- Customer services (44) – i.e., hours of service, availability of retail products, and product tracking.
- Policies/procedures (9) – i.e., general information, obtaining refunds or exchanging postage, and suggestions.

While many of the inquiries were customer specific, the following topics are highlighted for possible interest to a larger audience.

### **U.S. Postal Service Encourages Voters to Mail Early**

#### **Recommended mailing dates for overseas military members fast approaching**

With more than 25 million ballots expected to be mailed this fall, the U.S. Postal Service is encouraging voters to mail early this election season.

To ensure the timely delivery of mailed ballots, voters in the contiguous United States are asked to mail completed absentee ballots at least three days before the Nov. 6 date of the federal general election — or Nov. 3. Ballots mailed from the contiguous states to Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands and vice versa must be mailed at least five days prior to the election date — or Nov. 1. Voters should also consider the time of day when dropping their vote in a collection box to be sure it's not past the pick-up time for the particular collection box.

Americans overseas, including service members of the U.S. Armed Services, should plan on mailing ballots according to the mailing schedule at [www.usps.com/gov-services/gov-services.htm](http://www.usps.com/gov-services/gov-services.htm), or by contacting a local Army Post Office/Fleet Post Office (APO/FPO) or American embassy, for guidance in determining the actual cut-off date specific to the overseas location.

“Mail is an increasingly important part of U.S. elections, and we are confident in our ability to provide timely delivery of election mail,” said Megan Brennan, chief operating officer. “All American voters living overseas, whether civilian or military, have the opportunity to mail their completed ballots back home free of charge using the APO/FPO or by hand-delivering their ballots to the nearest American embassy or consulate.”

The Postal Service plays no role in how elections are carried out in the United States. A nonpartisan Elections Officials Mailing Resources site is available at [www.usps.com/electionmail](http://www.usps.com/electionmail) to inform election officials about Postal Service mailing options for election and political mail. Postal Service employees with expertise in

designing election mail pieces long have been providing reliable, trusted guidance to election officials across the country. The Postal Service works with election officials and secretaries of states to ensure election mail meets standards for efficient processing and timely delivery.

Tips for voters using mail ballots:

- Visit state websites to ascertain election office locations and Vote by Mail rules.
- Check with the local election office for rules governing mail ballots.
- Place completed ballots inside their window envelopes correctly.
- Ensure proper postage and stamp placement on upper right-hand corner of envelope.

## **U.S. Postal Service Announces New Prices and Services for 2013**

### **First-Ever Global Forever Stamp Debuts When Prices Change January 27**

Beginning early next year, the Postal Service will introduce a First-Class Mail Global Forever Stamp. The new stamp will allow customers to mail letters anywhere in the world for one set price of \$1.10, and is among new mailing and shipping services filed with the Postal Regulatory Commission today.

The price for First-Class Mail single-piece letters will increase by just a penny when prices change in Jan. The new 46 cent Forever stamps will allow customers to mail letters to any location in the United States. Forever stamps are always good for mailing a one-ounce letter anytime in the future regardless of price changes.

Highlights of the new single-piece First-Class Mail pricing, effective Jan. 27, 2013 include:

- Letters (1oz.) — 1-cent increase to 46 cents
- Letters additional ounces — unchanged at 20 cents
- Letters to all international destinations (1oz.) — \$1.10
- Postcards — 1-cent increase to 33 cents

The Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) will review the prices before they become effective Jan. 27, 2013. The Shipping and Mailing price filings will be available on the PRC website and the new Mailing Service prices will also be available at <http://pe.usps.com>.

### **Shipping Services**

Several new Shipping Services products will be available in January. Free tracking will be offered to all competitive packages, including retail Priority Mail and Parcel Post (recently renamed Standard Post).

Also new, customers shipping Critical Mail letters and flats will now have the option of receiving a signature upon delivery as part of the service offering.

A large variety of flat-rate boxes and envelopes for Express Mail and Priority Mail, including the padded and legal-sized flat rate envelopes will continue to be offered by the Postal Service.

New domestic retail pricing for Priority Mail Flat Rate products include:

- Small box — \$5.80
- Medium box — \$12.35
- Large box — \$16.85
- Large APO/FPO box — \$14.85
- Regular envelope — \$5.60
- Legal envelope — \$5.75
- Padded envelope — \$5.95